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SUBJECT: EU-RUSSIA SUMMIT OCT 4: READMISSION AGREEMENT  
LIKELY; DIALOGUE IMPROVING

Classified By: USEU POLOFF LEE LITZENBERGER; REASONS: 1.4 (B,D)

1. (C) Summary. The major outcome of the October 4 EU-Russia London summit is likely to be a Readmission Accord committing Russia to take back failed asylum seekers and other irregular migrants. In exchange, the EU will ease visa requirements on diplomats and other categories of Russians. Unlike recent summits, where Russia refused to discuss its "near abroad," the sides will exchange views on Chechnya, Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Georgia and Uzbekistan. On the eve of the summit, an EU-Russia Energy Ministerial Troika will take place, highlighting this important sector. Russia's new envoy to the EU, former DFM Chizhov, has shaken up staff at his mission and delights in needling the EU. In recent discussions, EU officials said relations with Russia are "stabilizing" in the wake of EU and NATO enlargement, and shared their views on Putin, Lavrov, Yastrezhembksi, and Chizhov. End Summary.

Summit Deliverables: Readmission Agreement and Visa Facilitation

2. (C) The major deliverable the EU foresees at its October 4 London summit with Moscow is Russian agreement to sign a Readmission Agreement in exchange for an EU offer to facilitate visas for some categories of Russian visitors. The Readmission Agreement, the text of which was negotiated several months ago, would commit Russia to take back failed asylum seekers and other irregular migrants who enter the EU from Russia. At present, Russia refuses to accept responsibility for these persons, many of whom are non-Russians who simply transit Russia to reach the EU. Signing has been hung up on two issues. Initially, Russia insisted that either the agreement apply only to Russian citizens, or that Russia must first sign its own readmission agreements with the third countries whose citizens transit Russia en route to the EU. Russia has also insisted on linking a Readmission Agreement to an EU decision to offer, or begin negotiating, visa-free access for Russians to enter the EU. Russia's quest for visa-free access is an outgrowth of EU enlargement when it arose during the delicate negotiations over Russian access to the Kaliningrad enclave.

3. (C) During EU Commissioner for Justice, Freedom and Security Franco Frattini's recent visit to Moscow, according to Council and Commission officials, Russia agreed to include third country nationals in the Readmission Agreement. In return, Frattini proposed that the EU might introduce some initial easing of visa restrictions on Russians traveling to Europe. Currently, some non-Schengen EU members (e.g. Poland) allow Russian diplomats visa-free entry, and Brussels is now thinking of extending this gesture throughout the Schengen area. Given the past history of Russian diplomatic espionage, however, this measure is somewhat controversial, according to Stefan Lehne, head of the Russia unit at the Council Secretariat. Another option under consideration is to permit multiple entry visas for certain categories of Russian visitors. As one EU official put it, "Free visas we can do; but visa-free is altogether different." The precise set of steps the EU will offer Russia is still under review, and may not be decided until EU Foreign Ministers meet October 3.

4. (C) Assuming the EU can agree a visa facilitation package, it is still not clear that the Readmission Agreement will be signed in London. The EU and Russia may instead simply announce their agreement to sign.

EU-Russia Relations: Stabilizing after Enlargement

5. (C) According to Michael Leigh, the Commission's Deputy DG for Eurasia and the Middle East, the UK Presidency is approaching the Russia summit with a "sober view;" this will not be a "decisive" summit. Rather, with agreement reached at last May's summit on the text of four "Common Spaces," the EU is focusing on implementation of these texts. That means prioritizing the dozens of issues that the sides have agreed to pursue in each of the four areas: External Security; Freedom, Security and Justice; Economics; and Research, Education and Culture. No great breakthroughs are foreseen by Leigh at the upcoming summit. At the Council Secretariat, Russia desk officer Carl Hallergard agreed, but added some

context. He said that the fact that EU-Russia relations are stabilizing is in and of itself a great achievement. It means Russia has accepted EU and NATO enlargement, and is in the process of defining its relations with Europe on that basis. The recent flap over border treaties with the Baltic states remains a sore point in the relationship, and Russia will raise concerns about this at the summit, but Russia has toned down its rhetoric and seems prepared to engage with the EU.

#### Near Abroad: No Longer Taboo

16. (C) According to Solana's Policy Planning Chief, Christoph Heusgen, and Heusgen's deputy for the CIS, Jukka Leskela, the taboo that Russia initially placed on discussing the near abroad following EU enlargement is gone. According to Michael Leigh, the summit language being drafted includes references to developments in Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. In a recent meeting with Russia's new Ambassador to the EU Chizhov (see below), Leskela said the EU had a good discussion on Georgia, including a frank exchange on South Ossetia. "We've seen movement on the Russian side," he said, even on discussing Chechnya. Heusgen said he was "shocked" at last May's Moscow summit by how backward-looking the whole Russian team was. Now, he said, Russia admits that it has a problem in the North Caucasus. It prefers to describe the region as being in a post-conflict phase, and seeks EU help with "reconstruction" vs. assistance to a conflict region, as the EU sees it. Nevertheless, Russia has accepted an EU offer of 20 million Euros in technical assistance for the North Caucasus, in addition to its ongoing humanitarian assistance for Chechnya.

#### Economic Update: Siberian Overflights

17. (C) Despite the progress being made on the political dialogue, and agreement to hold an EU-Russia Energy Minister's Troika on the eve of the London Summit, the longstanding dispute over Siberian overflights remains unresolved. At issue, according to Hallergard, are some \$150 million a year in fees paid to Aeroflot by European airlines overflying Siberia. The EU and Russia have concluded an agreement to "modernize" (i.e. reduce) these fees by 2013. The EU expected to see relief begin now and be phased in gradually through 2013. Russia, however, seems intent on maintaining the current fees until 2013. When EU frustration led to raising the issue with Putin at the May summit, according to Hallergard, Putin simply said, "But this issue is resolved; we have an agreement," and refused to engage. Hallergard added that it doesn't help that Putin's aide, Viktor Ivanov, is chairman of Aeroflot.

#### Beyond 2007: What Next?

18. (C) One issue in the background of the upcoming summit is the future framework of EU-Russian relations. The 1997 Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) is due to expire in 2007, and Russia has indicated it does not seek to renew it. The EU agrees that the PCA is outdated, but it is not clear what should replace it. The Russians have talked of a "Swiss" model, in which individual sectoral agreements will define the relationship, rather than having an overarching treaty governing EU-Russian ties. (Switzerland has separate agreements with the EU in seven sectors, including free movement of persons, air transport, trade in agricultural products, etc.) Under such an arrangement, the EU and Russia could implement their four common spaces through multiple sectoral agreements. This is not likely to be a major topic at the summit, but there may be some discussion on the margins about the future structure of EU-Russia relations.

#### Russian Ambassador shakes things up

19. (C) The big news in Brussels about EU-Russian relations is the recent and long-awaited arrival of Vladimir Chizhov as Ambassador to the EU. The post has been vacant for a year and a half, since Mikhail Fradkov left Brussels in March, 2004 to become Putin's Prime Minister. According to Pirkka Tapiola, who covers CIS issues at the Council Secretariat, Chizhov has browbeat his staff, who had grown accustomed to their more relaxed Charge (Mikhail Petrakov). Now, Tapiola said, the Russian diplomats are minding their p's and q's, and lavishly greeting Chizhov as "Your Excellency" and asking how his wife, children and dog are doing each day.

10. (C) When asked recently about Chizhov, Christoph Heusgen rolled his eyes and told visiting EUR DAS David Kramer, "He's a nightmare. I know him all too well. On the surface, he's a nice guy." Heusgen added, however, that in recent talks with the EU in London, "you could see how much he loved to needle the Baltic states and lecture them" over the border agreements issue. Heusgen said he had had a long conversation about Chizhov with Putin aide Sergei Yastrezhenski on the margins of last May's summit. Yastrezhenski told Heusgen that Chizhov (at the time head of EU affairs at MFA) saw EU-Russian relations in zero-sum

terms, and did not want to build a constructive, working relationship with Europe: "he wants to find weaknesses in the EU."

#### EU Policy Planning Chief on key Russian players

11. (C) In addition to commenting on Chizhov, Heusgen offered the following insights into other key Russian interlocutors:

-- Yastrezhemi: He's "ready to work with the EU."  
Heusgen finds him easy to talk to -- "he has an Italian wife."

-- FM Lavrov: Gaining power; the Foreign Ministry was able to influence the Presidency to cancel a meeting the EU tried to set up in July to brief Yastrezhemi on the EU's plans for a border monitoring mission in Moldova. (Ironically, Chizhov subsequently chided Heusgen for not being "transparent" about that mission.) Heusgen added, "Solana doesn't share this view. He sees Lavrov as a civil servant -- and a pain -- but not that influential with the Kremlin." According to Stefan Lehne, the EU's September 5 ministerial in London was a "lovefest," but Lavrov "can turn it on and off."

-- Putin: Comes across as genuine, someone you can do business with. But he's not a democrat. He seems to be thinking, "I tried a market economy, and got Khodorkovsky and the oligarchs, so I've stopped that. I tried democracy, and the governors became corrupt and out of control and the media started to tell lies, so I've stopped that." From Putin's perspective, Lukashenko would seem to have a "perfect" arrangement. Russia has no democratic tradition, Heusgen noted, and the West needs to find a way to say that we understand that. Maybe we should promote "political pluralism" instead of "Democracy." If Putin can't achieve the ideal of democracy, we should think about what is doable in practical terms that would move Russia in the right direction.

MCKINLEY

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